

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Benchmark Foam, Inc.

South Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Lean Implementation Becomes A Standard at Benchmark Foam, Inc.

Client Profile:

Benchmark Foam, Inc. is a manufacturer of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) and other specialty plastics for packaging, construction insulation (insulated concrete forms including Lite-Form and Fold-Form, foam roofing systems, exterior finish systems (EIFS), etc.), decoration, signs, floatation, and custom products. The privately-owned company employs 45 people at its facility in Watertown, South Dakota.

Situation:

After two years of leveled sales activity in a competitive marketplace, Benchmark Foam president, Tom Devine, approached his management staff to discuss the implementation of Lean principles. It was decided that the first step would be to attend Dakota Manufacturing Extension Partnership's (Dakota MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, Lean 101 seminar. The company then asked Dakota MEP to provide a three-day training session on the Value Stream Mapping (VSM) process.

Solution:

Through the Lean training provided by Dakota MEP, Benchmark Foam learned the basic functions of VSM and began projects focused on eliminating non-value additions and steps. In one area of the building, a simple relocation of supplies saved one team member 100 miles of extra walking distance per year. In another area, a scrap reduction effort decreased the amount of foam scrap generated by 4 percent, an annual savings of over \$20,000. Along with the mini-projects, an extensive effort of the 5S program was implemented, making a cleaner, more organized production floor and office environment.

Results:

- * Reduced scrap by 4 percent, for an annual savings of \$20,000.
- * Created a safer, more organized working environment.

Testimonial:

"The Lean principles are tools that enable the employees on the production floor to make the necessary improvement changes; it is a bottom-to-top philosophy. Dakota MEP has shown us the basic ideas behind Lean, now it's up to us to make it happen."

Douglas Freese, Cutting Manager